Bike Alliance of Northwest Arkansas

Meadow – Holcomb – Maple Pilot Project
Response to Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the project?

To evaluate changes to the street design for one-year. Changes to the street design make it safer for all users of the street (people driving cars, people riding bicycles, and people walking) to travel to where they live, work, go to school, or restaurants and shops along the corridor.

What is the period for the pilot project?

The project will be in place for at least a year to have sufficient time to collect data and evaluate its success. Total vehicle usage and speed, total bicycle usage, as well as crash data will be collected and a post-installation survey is currently available.

What was changed on the corridor?

- Two-way protected bike lanes (or cycle track) (https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/cycle-tracks/)on Meadow on the south side of the street
- Parking-protected bike lanes and directional protected bike lanes on Holcomb
- Directional protected bike lanes on Maple
- Rubberized lane separators known as Zebras were installed in painted buffers to provide bike ridersa physical protection from vehicles
- Vertical reflective bollards were added to provide additional visibility for drivers
- Green paint was used on the bike lanes in high-risk conflict areas
- Vehicle travel lanes were narrowed to slow and calm vehicle traffic
- On-street parallel parking was added to the west side of Holcomb
- Signage alerting to drivers of bike facilities was installed

How are the actual changes supposed to affect users of the corridor?

The pilot uses various design elements and speeds mitigation techniques found in NACTO to:

- Encourage people driving cars to drive at or below the posted speeds
- Discourage people from driving cars in the bike lanes
- Discourage distracted driving (e.g. texting while driving)
- Create a connected facility that allows people to ride bikes to and from the Razorback Greenway
- Create safer conditions for children riding bicycles and walking to and from school
- Make it safer, and more comfortable for people to walk on the sidewalks along the corridor
- Provide safer conditions for people riding bikes to visit the library, hospital, post office, and other destinations on the corridor.

Why make changes to the corridor?

The city adopted an Individual Community Action Plan as part of the Northwest Arkansas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan in 2015 which laid out goals and objectives for mobility improvements in the community. The Mission of BikeNWA is to educate, inspire, and activate the Northwest Arkansas community to support the creation of a world-class all ages and abilities network of bicycle infrastructure to increase the number of people riding bicycles. Although we are focused on people riding bikes, we care about the safety of all street users. It is a fact that implementing bicycle infrastructure creates safer conditions for all street users. People driving cars are safer because a) the facilities encourage people to drive speeds at or below the speed limit, b) there is an increased distance between moving vehicles and people walking on the sidewalk, and c) reduced vehicle speeds make it safer to cross streets because of increased sight lines and lower speeds.

What was wrong with the wide vehicle lanes on the corridor?

The lanes were wider than necessary for a 25 mph street and encouraged speeding. The new lanes may seem narrower than 10ft because of the visual impact of the zebras. People driving cars have expressed that this visual narrowing causes them safety concerns. However, this feeling of narrowness and a desire to avoid obstacles is exactly what causes people to be more cautious and drive slower. This makes drivers more alert which creates a safer street for all users. Research shows that the more comfortable someone feels driving down the street, the more likely they are to travel faster than the speed limit and to do things that are illegal, like texting and driving.

Why do we need to encourage people driving cars to slow down on this corridor?

We need to do so to increase the safety of people driving cars, riding bikes and walking. For the average pedestrian, the chance of death when hit by a car going 40 mph is 45%, 35 mph is 31%, and 25 mph is 12%. The chances of people driving cars dying in a vehicle on vehicle collision also decrease the slower the vehicle is traveling.

Are narrow lanes more dangerous than wide lanes?

No. You can Google this if you like or check out one example study here. The problem is that for many years engineers designed streets to be wider than needed to try to make people safer when driving faster than the speed limit. Often streets were designed for people to travel more than ten mph above the speed limit. The problem is that this encourages speeding and results in more crashes and more dangerous streets.

What are those things sticking up on the corners?

Those white plastic stick-looking things with reflective stickers are called bollards. They are there to prevent you from hitting one of the zebras when turning on or off of the street. They are also there to encourage you to slow down when turning. People taking turns too fast cause multiple safety problems to all road users. A tighter turning radius makes a person driving a car more cautious.

I am scared I am going to hit a zebra!

Driving at a slower rate of speed will help you feel more comfortable with the zebras and add seconds to your drive. By slowing down you can double the chance that a pedestrian or cyclist will live if you hit them. Are 20 secs worth doubling the chances of killing someone trying to cross a street?

I hate the look of those zebras!

Yes, some people may not like the look of the zebras. These are a cost-effective material that was chosen for this project due to the relative ease of installation. A permanent implementation could use a different material such as a concrete curb. This would be more attractive (no one complains about them now) and still provide separation and safety. Try not to focus on the aesthetics during this testing phase. There are plenty of places where orange barrels and cones are used during construction projects on streets for lengthy periods.

Why are the bike lanes on Maple different widths?

The street itself was different widths, to begin with, and the street could only be narrowed down to a certain amount and still meet design standards. The zebras are set on an angle where there was room for a buffer and parallel to the striping where there was not.

What about room for emergency vehicles?

Yes, 10ft lanes are adequate for emergency response vehicles. The zebras that separate the bike lane from the car lane are mountable meaning that even a small car can pass over them to get out of the way of emergency vehicles without causing damage. The effective width of the street for emergencies hasn't changed.

How do these changes affect the collection of trash?

The trash truck arms reach twelve feet and so it does not affect their operation.

What about mail delivery and UPS/FedEx?

The mail truck can straddle the bike lanes and to deliver mail. The UPS and FedEx trucks can drive across the zebras and deliver packages the same as before. Nothing has changed except for drivers needing to b more careful when pulling up to the curb.

Why do we need more bike facilities?

It is important to have a more equitable transportation network. This means safer conditions and connectivity for those walking, riding bicycles, and using the bus system. If you don't own a car (can't afford one or for just other reasons) and need to get to your job, or a doctor's appointment, or to school, why should you not be able to do so safely?

What is a protected bike lane?

One-way protected bike lanes are bikeways that are at street level and use a variety of methods for physical protection from passing traffic. These bike facilities- dedicates and protects space for bicyclists to improve perceived comfort and safety, eliminates risk and fear of collisions with over-taking vehicles, have a low implementation cost by making use of existing pavement and drainage (NACTO 2018).

Why not build shared-use paved trails?

The city just can't build trails everywhere like the Razorback Greenway. It would be prohibitively expensive. Also, because of the numerous curb cuts for driveways, homes, and businesses a trail would be less safe. People driving cars would have to look left and right for people walking on the sidewalk, left and right for bicycles coming from both directions, and then left and right for cars. You would need to do all of that so quickly before one of those users that you didn't see before gets to close. Additionally, what if you lived on the opposite side of the trail? We need bike facilities that are safely accessible for larger percentages of residents. One-way directional protected bike lanes are more equitable to the neighborhoods because they serve both sides of a street, just like vehicle lanes.

We don’t see many people using them. What a waste! Will people even use them?

Yes, people use them. Data shows that if you build safe bike facilities people will utilize them. They said the same thing about the Razorback Greenway, and now we have 10's of thousands of people on the Greenway. Be patient, its winter and cold. We don't yet have that year-round commuting population.

How does this help people walking along the corridor?

The buffer that keeps cars from driving in the bike lane also makes it safer to walk on the sidewalk by creating more space between moving vehicles and people walking. There is now at least a 4 ft gap instead of 0 ft in places before. Think about how nice that space is to have when you are walking with your kids, have a young child on a tricycle, or a four-year riding her bike for the first time.

This project also included striping in cross-walks along the corridor wherever there were pedestrian ramps. We would have loved to have striped them at every street intersection, but because of ADA, we were only allowed to do so where there were existing pedestrian ramps. We did not have the funds to install new concrete ramps. That would be permanent, and this is a pilot project.

Who paid for the pilot project?

The materials and consultants that designed and managed the installation of the project were paid for by a grant from the Walton Family Foundation to BikeNWA. City staff has participated in the project via meetings, on-site checks for quality and standards control, assistance with the installation of signs, and deployment of speed and volume monitoring devices. The total project cost is approximately $100,000.

Finally, remember that this is a pilot project!

Remember that this is testing something and there will be ample opportunities for feedback over the coming year. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to send an email to info@bikenwa.org. We will periodically make updates to this document.